

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:NEA:MDRAPER
APPROVED BY:NEA:MDRAPER
S/S-O:JTHYDEN

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S E C R E T STATE 227582

EXDIS

PLEASE PASS SECRETARY VANCE'S PARTY AT CAMP DAVID, FOR KAMER,
SAUNDERS OR ATHERTON

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 5203 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN
DAMASCUS TEL AVIV JERUSALEM JIDDA CAIRO LONDON BONN PARIS USUN
NEW YORK USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE 07 SEP 78.

QUOTE: S E C R E T BEIRUT 5203

EXDIS

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT PORS IS LE SY
SUBJ: SITUATION IN LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
BOUTROS

1. SUMMARY: BOUTROS IN DEPRESSED MOOD. CONCERNED
ABOUT CAMP DAVID OUTCOME AND EFFECT ON LEBANON. ALSO
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CONCERNED ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS AND BELIEVES THEY
SEEKING ISOLATE MARONITES FROM ARAB WORLD AND WANT
TO USE THEIR SPECIAL RELATION AS JUSTIFICATION FOR
INTERFERENCE. SUGGESTS WE GET GERMANS AND BRITISH
TO WORK ON LEBANESE FRONT LEADERS, AND THINKS IT
PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FRONT KNOW ABOUT NEGATIVE
SAUDI REACTION CONVEYED TO US BY MANSOURI. WE

DISCUSSED NEED CONVINCE SYRIANS THEY SHOULD TRY POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY SETTLEMENT. HE TRYING ARRANGE MEETING BETWEEN SARKIS AND ASSAD COMING FEW DAYS, AND ASKS WHAT WE WILL BE PREPARED TO DO TO HELP LEBANON IN EVENT THERE IS FALLING OUT. SAYS RENEWAL OF ADF MANDATE WAS CONTENTIOUS ISSUE AND LIKELY BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE. IF THERE IS DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN LEBANON AND SYRIA ON THIS ISSUE WE WILL BE ASKED SUPPORT LEBANON. WE SHOULD DO SOME CONTINGENCY PLANNING IN THIS RESPECT. END SUMMARY.

2. ARN DIRECTOR DESIGNATE CLUVERIOUS AND I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7. BOUTROS IN DEPRESSED MOOD. HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WE COULD TELL HIM ABOUT CAMP DAVID SUMMIT AND ITS POSSIBLE IMPACT ON LEBANON, A MATTER WHICH IS VERY MUCH ON LEBANESE MINDS. (LEBANESE FEAR MEETING WILL RESULT IN BILATERAL SETTLEMENT WHICH WILL INCREASE TENSIONS IN LEBANON.) I TOLD HIM WE HAD NO DETAILS EXCEPT REPORTS ON LIFE STYLES OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

3. IN ANY EVENT, WE THOUGHT MOST THAT COULD BE EXPECTED WOULD BE AGREEMENT ON BASIS FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. BOUTROS WANTED TO KNOW HOW LONG
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MEETING WOULD LAST. I SAID WE DID NOT KNOW, BUT THOUGHT IT MIGHT LAST AS LONG AS A WEEK AT MINIMUM JUDGING BY STATEMENTS OF THE PARTIES.

4. BOUTROS WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WE COULD TELL HIM ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS REGARDING LEBANON. I SAID IT WAS MY PERSONAL VIEW THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE IN ISRAELI ATTITUDE. THEY STILL DID NOT WANT TO GET DRAWN INTO CONFRONTATION WITH SYRIA OVER LEBANON. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT LEBANESE FRONT LEADERS WERE TALKING INCREASINGLY ABOUT THE INEVITABILITY OF LARGE SCALE FIGHTING WITH SYRIANS. WE HAD LUNCHEONED THE DAY BEFORE AT THE HOME OF VICTOR MOUSSA, ONE OF THE LESSER CHAMOUNIST LIGHTS, AT WHICH A NUMBER OF PROMINENT LEBANESE FRONT MEMBERS WERE PRESENT. THEY HAD ALL BEEN TALKING IN TERMS WHICH I FOUND VERY DISTURBING. THEIR THESIS WAS THAT MARONITES HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN TO ARMS TO END SYRIAN OCCUPATION. WE UNDERSTOOD THEY HAD SOME SWEEPING PLANS WHICH WERE BASED ON ISRAELI INTERVENTION, WHATEVER ISRAELIS MIGHT WANT. DANGER WAS THAT LEBANESE FRONT WOULD

PROVOKE FIGHTING WHICH ISRAELIS COULD NOT AVOID ENTERING.

5. BOUTROS SAID HE WAS NOT CONVINCED ISRAELIS WERE NOT LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE TO INTERVENE. IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT THEY WERE DELIBERATELY PUBLICIZING THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE MARONITES IN ORDER (A) TO BURN THE LATTER SO THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO RECOURSE BUT RELIANCE ON ISRAEL AND (B) ULTIMATELY TO GIVE THEMSELVES A JUSTIFICATION FOR INTERFERENCE. QUESTION WAS WHETHER THEIR INTENT WAS SIMPLY TO INTERVENE SYMBOLICALLY, AS WITH THEIR OVERFLIGHTS, OR WHETHER THEY INTENDED TO DESTROY SYRIAN ARMY IN LEBANON. I SAID ULTIMATE NATURE OF ISRAELI ACTION WOULD
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DEPEND TO LARGE EXTENT ON SYRIAN REACTION. IF, FOR INSTANCE, ISRAELIS TRIED QUICK AIRSTRIKE AND SYRIANS RESPONDED WITH THEIR OWN AIR FORCE, LATTER WOULD THEN BE DESTROYED. IF SYRIANS CHOSE TO REACT OTHERWISE, NEXT ISRAELI ACTION WOULD BE TAILORED ACCORDINGLY.

6. WE DISCUSSED WHAT COULD BE DONE TO MODIFY LEBANESE FRONT ATTITUDES, WHICH WE BOTH AGREED WERE CRUCIAL. WE ALSO AGREED THAT THERE WAS LITTLE PURPOSE IN MY TALKING TO THEM BECAUSE THEY HAD COME TO REGARD ME AS PRO-SYRIAN. BOUTROS SUGGESTED I GET THE BRITISH AND GERMAN AMBASSADORS TO WORK ON THEM. SAID I WOULD DO SO.

7. WE ALSO DISCUSSED NEED FOR GOL TO CLARIFY RESPECTIVE POSITIONS WITH SYRIANS AND MAKE LATTER APPRECIATE NEED FOR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. BOUTROS NOTED THAT SYRIANS THOUGHT THEY COULD SETTLE THINGS BY FORCE AND THIS NEVER WORKED IN LEBANON. BOUTROS SAID HE WAS TRYING TO ARRANGE FOR SARKIS TO MEET WITH ASSAD AGAIN BEFORE LATTER'S DEPARTURE FOR GERMANY NEXT WEEK. HE SAID THAT IF THE TWO LEADERS AGREED THAT WAS FINE, BUT IF THEY DISAGREED THERE MIGHT BE TROUBLE, AND HE ASKED WHAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DO TO SUPPORT LEBANESE IN EVENT SARKIS FOUND HIMSELF AT CROSS-PURPOSES WITH ASSAD. I SAID IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO ANSWER QUESTION OF THAT SORT, BUT I WAS SURE WE WOULD CONTINUE APPROPRIATE POLITICAL SUPPORT OF LEBANON. WE HAD BEEN VERY ACTIVE ON THEIR BEHALF IN DAMASCUS AND OTHER CAPITALS, AND I WAS SURE WE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE SO.
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8. I DESCRIBED TO BOUTROS THE EFFORTS WE ARE MAKING IN VARIOUS CAPITALS, INCLUDING DAMASCUS AND JIDDA. HE WAS VERY INTERESTED IN SAUDI REACTION, AND I DESCRIBED FOR HIM BRIEFLY COMMENTS MADE BY MANSOURI AND REPORTED IN JIDDA'S 6408. I SAID SAUDIS WERE PLAYING BACK TO US THE SAME LINE THE SYRIANS WERE GIVING; I.E., THE SYRIANS WERE ACTING TO SUPPORT LEGALITY OF LEBANON AND THEIR ACTIONS WERE ONLY IN SELF-DEFENSE. MANSOURI HAD ACCUSED US OF SPEAKING FOR THE MARONITES AND THE ISRAELIS JUST AS THE SYRIANS WERE DOING. BOUTROS SAID IT VERY IMPORTANT WE CONVEY THE SAUDI REACTION TO LEBANESE FRONT LEADERS. ALTHOUGH LATTER WERE DISMISSING OTHER ARAB OUT OF HAND IN THEIR STATEMENTS TO US, THEY WERE IN FACT BEGINNING TO GET CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR ISOLATION.

9. COMMENT: THIS CONVERSATION SHOULD BE READ IN TANDEM WITH REPORT OF FOLLOWING CONVERSATION WITH SRKIS. ISSUE WHICH MAY ARISE IF SARKIS AND ASSAD MEET IS QUESTION POSED BY BOUTROS AS TO WHAT U.S. WILL DO IF SARKIS AND ASSAD DISAGREE. IN PARTICULAR, BOUTROS SAID RENEWAL OF ADF MANDATE WAS CONTENTIOUS ISSUE AND LIKELY BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE. LEBANON HAS NOT YET MADE OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR ITS RENEWAL AND IT IS POSSIBLE THERE WILL BE DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN SARKIS AND ASSAD ON THIS ISSUE, OR ON GENERAL QUESTION OF SYRIAN POSTURE IN LEBANON. IN THAT EVENT, LEBANON WILL SEEK OUR SUPPORT AGAINST SYRIANS. WE WOULD DO WELL TO THINK ABOUT THIS CONTINGENCY IN ADVANCE.
PARKER

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE227582
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA:MDRAPER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780365-0508
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780987/aaaacufs.tel
Line Count: 209
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 25301054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1501171
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PORS, IS, LE, SY
To: WHITE HOUSE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/25301054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014